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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed in response to a lack of parental involvement in a fourth grade classroom. The goals of the practicum were: (1) to encourage parents to become involved in helping their children learn at home as well as at school by attending parent-teacher conferences and other school-related activities; (2) to provide home visitation in order to help in establishing a home curriculum; and (3) to give support to parents who need help in assisting their children with homework. All 25 parents became involved in some aspect of the program, and considerable gains were made in parents' attitudes toward regular visits to school. In addition, parents monitored homework and, consequently, children completed and returned assignments. Twenty-three references are listed and two brief survey forms are appended. (PCB)

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Increasing Parental Involvement in Helping Fourth Grade Children to Learn Through Home Curriculum to Improve Homework Habits

Geraldine M. Barber

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NOVA UNIVERSITY

Increasing Parental Involvement in Helping Fourth Grade Children to Learn Through Home Curriculum to Improve Homework Habits

by

Geraldine M. Barber

Cluster XX

A Practicum I Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY
1987

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Abstract

Increasing Parental Involvement in Helping Fourth Grade Children to Learn Through Home Curriculum to Improve Homework Habits.

Barber, Geraldine M., 1987: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: School-Parent Relationship / School's Attitude / Parent's Attitude / School Involvement / Parents' Rights / Parent-Teacher Cooperation / Parent Workshops / Parent Grievances / Parent Education / Parents / Employed Parents / Parent Involvement / Child Caregivers / Participation / Parent Materials / Family Involvement / Parent's Role / Family-School Relationship / Parent-School Relationship / Parent Associations / Parent Conferences / Parent Counseling / Parent Influence / Parent-Child Relationship / Parent Responsibility / Parents' Obligations

This practicum was designed to focus on the lack of parental involvement in the writer's 4th-grade classroom. Many parents were not actively involved in their children's learning, especially in monitoring their homework habits. The review of the literature provided information on a number of different approaches to solving the problem.

The writer's goals were: (1) to encourage 25 parents of a 4th-grade class to become actively involved in helping their children to learn at home as well as at school by attending parent-teacher conferences and other school related activities; (2) to provide home visitation to help in establishing a home curriculum; and (3) to give support to parents who needed assistance in helping their children with homework. The writer implemented a flexible program in lieu of a conventional program that increased parents' participation in school activities and the monitoring of homework assignments.

The writer was able to get all 25 parents involved, even though all parents did not attend every activity. Considerable gains were made in the parents' attitude toward regular visits to the school, due to the flexibility in planning and allowing the parents to visit the school at their convenience. The home curriculum and supportive assistance allowed parents to monitor homework assignments, and resulted in all 25 children returning to school with their homework completed.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Community

This practicum took place in an elementary school located near a major city in the midwest region of the country. The elementary school (kindergarten through fifth grade), located in the suburbs, was a part of an urban blue collar industrial community, which had suffered from a declining steel industry and subsequent loss of related area manufacturers. The decline in this industry was a reflection of the economic hard times that had befallen the entire region.

Because of these economic conditions, some of the communities were over populated and had caused schools within these communities to become overly populated. In addition, the schools were victimized by polarization.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

In 1984 the public school system of this community had an annual operating budget of approximately $77.5 million. The system employed 3,182 workers during the 1983-84 school year, and was the second largest employer in the city. The school corporation was comprised of a board of trustees and a superintendent. The five trustees

were appointed by the duly elected mayor of the city and each served terms of 4 years (1 member was appointed each year for 3 consecutive years, and 2 members were appointed the 4th year). The board had the responsibility of appointing the superintendent, and the superintendent had the monumental responsibility of organizing and implementing the $77 million education program.

According to the 1984 School Statistical Report, there were 39 schools: 28 elementary, 6 middle, and 5 high schools. The total school enrollment in the fall of 1983 was 30,404 (15,416 male and 14,988 female). By these standards, the operation of this school system was vast in size, complexity, and function.

There were roughly 16,000 children in the 28 elementary schools. The classroom teacher was the key person and received assistance and support from many sources. There were several special education programs which dealt with a variety of exceptionalities. These programs for the mentally and physically impaired, emotionally disturbed, hearing impaired, and the blind, were not all inclusive of the various programs offered.

The support services included psychologists, social workers, speech therapists, counselors, evaluators, researchers, and paraprofessionals. In addition, there were mathematic and reading laboratories, special purpose classes, a school for the gifted, a Saturday school, and a

school for the performing arts. There was also a parent involvement program.

In addition to all of those support services and programs for the children, there was support for the teachers. That support included resource teachers who worked with teachers, and instructional aides who, under the supervision of principals of each individual facility, worked schoolwide to provide instructional support. The staff developmental center assisted elementary teachers with the upgrading of existing skills and in acquiring new skills. This elementary school district was, in effect, many schools that had worked together and made it possible for all the students in that area to have a set of common and general experiences.

The writer of this practicum received her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees from Indiana University Northwest. The writer has been certified to teach kindergarten through eighth grade.

The writer has been employed in the public school system for 22 years and has had a variety of educational experiences prior to her present position as a 4th-grade teacher. Prior to teaching fourth grade, the writer was a transitional 1st- and 2nd-grade teacher. In that capacity, she diagnosed and remediated students with auditory, visual, and psychomotor deficits. In addition to her teaching position, she wrote and consulted for a major research laboratory.

The writer is the state director of a national teenage scholarship program, a local director of a national Touch-A-Teen organization, and a member of the Association for Childhood Education. The writer is building representative for the local Reading Council, United Negro College Fund, and the local Alliance of Black School Educators. She also served as union representative for her facility.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

Many parents of school-age children do not become actively involved in their children's learning. They seldom visit the school. Many only come for parent/teacher report card conferences (twice yearly); some parents do not come at all.

Some parents do not visit the school because they think that report card conferences are the only times that they should visit. There are those who would like to become involved but are unsure of what to do and how to do it.

Most parents' work schedules caused a conflict with school visitations. In the school district where this practicum took place, teachers discovered that parents often used their work schedules as an excuse for not visiting the school. They did not feel that they should occasionally take a day off from work to visit the school. There were parents who, because of the economic conditions of the area were in depressed situations, such as: poor housing, no employment, very little food, and poor clothing. Because of those conditions, parents were not quite ready to face the outside world, especially the school. Schools were the last place they wanted to visit.

Children, therefore, are often left on their own when it comes to learning. The problem is that there is a lack of parental involvement in helping children to learn.

Documentation of the Problem

The results of parents' attendance at three parent/teacher conferences (PTC) for the first 3 months of the 1986-87 school year showed that very few parents attended the conferences. Notices (see Appendix A) were sent to parents of the writer's 4th-grade children, asking them to attend a PTC. They were asked to sign their name and to check, "Yes, I will attend the conference", or "No, I will not attend the conference." In September, notices were sent to 26 parents; in October, to 28 parents; and in November, to 25 parents. Each month only a few parents returned the notices and attended the conferences (see Table 1).

Those parents that returned notices were the same ones who attended PTC on a regular basis. Here again, parents seemed to lack the interest even to learn of and to discuss their children's problems and progress.

In conversations and in informal interviews, parents revealed that they did not feel comfortable when they visited the school. They stated that they felt they were intruders, and that their assistance was not needed. Most of the parents gave the excuse of not being able to

Table 1

Record of Parents who Responded to Notices and Attended Parent/Teacher Conferences.

Month	# of Students	# of Parents Responded	# of Parents Attended	Total # Responded or Attended
September	26	7	4	11
October	28	10	8	18
November	25	6	4	10

get release time from their jobs and having younger children at home as reasons for not visiting the school.

In addition to talking with parents, the writer also talked with teachers and aides. They reported that they were quite dissatisfied with the way things were because many students had not been doing their homework; and, therefore, their performances were lacking in the classroom. They also cited many discipline problems which they felt contributed to the lack of parental involvement.

The writer investigated the attendance of these same parents when their children were in first, second, and third grades (See Table 2). The results indicated that the parents' attendance decreased tremendously each year. It appears that, as the children became older, the parents assumed less and less responsibility in helping them to learn; and they participated less in school activities.

Table 2

PTC Attendance Record During School Years 1983-1986.

PTC Meetings	# of Students	Class	# of Parents Who Attended			
			Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sept - Dec						
1983-84	28	12	24	18	23	26
1984-85	31	21	22	15	20	23
1985-86	26	31	10	10	12	14
Jan - May			Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
1983-84	28	12	17	22	16	24	27
1984-85	31	21	12	18	14	22	20
1985-86	26	31	6	10	5	6	8

A Parent Survey for Developing a Home Curriculum (see Appendix B) was sent to 25 homes of the children in this 4th-grade class. The parents were to respond to 11 items on a questionnaire. Only 16 parents returned the completed questionnaire.

The 16 respondents seemed to be eager and excited about the development of a home curriculum. Several parents called the school making inquiry as to when the program would begin. Based on the survey as shown in Table 3, it was evident that there was a need for a home curriculum.

Table 3

Parents' Survey for Developing a Home Curriculum.

Item Number*	Parent Response Yes**	No**	No Response***
1	16	-	-
2	14	2	-
3	15	1	-
4	12	4	-
5	9	6	1
6	12	2	2
7	8	8	-
8	16	-	-
9	15	1	-
10	15	-	1
11	12	4	-

* The item numbers on the table refer to the same numbers for the question on the survey.

** Yes and No responses refer to the number of parents who answered yes or no on the survey.

*** No response refers to the number of parents who did not respond to a particular item on the survey.

Analysis of the Causes

At this point, the most obvious problem is the lack of parental involvement in helping children to learn. Recent evidence indicates that a cause of the problem is that many parents are doing much less than they might in helping their children to learn at home. For example, American mothers on an average spend less than a half hour a day talking, explaining, or reading with their children; and fathers spend less than 15 minutes (Bennett, 1986).

There is a need for a home curriculum. Children need consistency in learning. They should learn not only at school but also at home. Parents can do many things at home to help their children to succeed in school.

Another contributing cause of the problem is that some parents are working parents, and some are a working parent in a single parent household. Work schedules can cause conflicts in becoming involved in school activities.

A very serious cause of the problem is that there are parents who have had poor experiences with schools. Some parents are hesitant to come to school because they have a limited command of English and feel too uncomfortable in trying to communicate, therefore, they shy away.

Involvement is the key to success in any parent project. Teachers must find ways to involve parents and make them feel comfortable. Administrators, teachers, and staff must find some solutions as to how they may improve the school and parent relationship.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

We are currently embarked on a social experiment of enormous significance. Never before in our history have more than half of our children below the age of six been cared for outside of the home on a regular basis for extended periods of time.

During the critical early childhood years, young children form lifelong attitudes toward themselves and others, as well as toward their capacity for initiative and learning. If we bungle this experiment, we may emotionally and educationally disable a significant proportion of future generations. How can we, as professional educators, help parents make informed choices regarding the care and education of their young children. (Elkind, 1986).

Bennett (1986) reported that parents are their children's first and most influential teachers. What parents do to help their children learn is more important to academic success than how well off the family is. Parents can do many things at home to help their children succeed in school. Unfortunately, recent evidence indicates that many parents are doing much less than they might.

> "They can create a 'curriculum of the home' that teaches their children what matters. They do this through their daily conversations, household routines, attention to school matters, and affectionate concern of their children's progress.
>
> Conversation is important. Children learn to read, reason, and understand things better when their parents read, talk, and listen to them; tell them stories; play games; share hobbies; and discuss the news, TV programs, and special events.

> Research on both gifted and disadvantaged children indicate that home efforts can greatly improve student achievement." (Bennett, 1986, p. 6).

The Division of Reading Effectiveness was established in 1973, and as 1 of approximately 20 divisions within the Indiana Department of Public Instruction, it focuses on the basic skills of reading. Division consultants work directly with local school personnel, both public and non-public, and with parents in workshop settings. In doing so, the consultants provide direct and often individualized service. Children in Indiana ultimately reap the benefits of these cooperative efforts. A variety of programs are carried out by the Division each year, as stated by Dierstein and Jobes (1983).

They also stated that more than 10,000 parents have received materials and ideas designed especially for them. Local school corporations, in conjunction with the Division of Reading Effectiveness, sponsored parent workshops titled, "Parent Participation: A Formula for Success." The materials distributed at the workshop included three handbooks for parents. These materials were designed to provide parents with practical suggestions as to how they could reinforce the child's learning in the area of comprehension, motivation, and mathematics. The booklets were divided into age categories so that parents could find activities to reinforce learning at various age levels.

Parents also received a set of eleven booklets that focused on such diverse topics, such as parent/teacher conferences, community resources, reading aloud, easy learning activities, and helping teenagers succeed. By exposing parents to these activities, it builds their confidence in helping their youngsters at home.

Smith and Harris (1984) stated in their guide for planning outreach programs, that the question "What can I do to help my child be a better reader?" has been answered across the country through a variety of outreach programs. Recognizing the role of the home in preparing a child for fostering growth in reading, educators have organized programs to utilize home influence systematically. Enthusiastic commitment, accompanied by careful planning based on local needs and resources, can yield insight for others interested in designing an outreach strategy.

Smith and Harris (1984) further stated that almost without exception the work parent appears in the titles and reports of outreach programs in educational literature. Awkward as it may sound at first, alternative descriptors should be considered, for in many instances it is not the parent who is responsible for his or her child; and the home may not represent a traditional family. Additionally, if the appeal is made only to parents, other potential participants might remain unaware of the role that they could take. Substituting the term child-advocate or

advocate for parent lengthens the list of likely participants.

To determine who can be reached, it is helpful to ascertain who has concern for each child. Smith and Harris suggest that some concerns might be: Can we reach parents, grandparents, siblings, or other relatives? Or perhaps we can reach guardians, or parents of preschoolers. Can we reach the learner, or maybe a concerned neighbor or friend? Shouldn't we try to reach babysitters and childcare workers? Don't we want to reach high school students, parents of the future?

According to Smith and Harris (1984), a school is the likely sponsor of an outreach program, and advocates become more involved with academic programs for children when they receive assistance from the school system. The experience of some programs demonstrates that advocates themselves are the best means of reaching other advocates. When a community member makes a home visit or accompanies an educator on a visit, credibility might be enhanced and the anxiety of new advocates could diminish. In some communities, telephone calls, an invitation from a neighbor, or the chance to discuss school matters in a neighbor's home have increased advocate involvement. It may be helpful to answer these questions to determine who can reach out in a community.

Can other parents reach out? Can other volunteer adults, or perhaps older students reach out? What about teachers, can they team with community members to reach out? Or administrators, can they lead, support, and participate in outreach programs?

A key to the success of an outreach program is in identifying its mission. Determining a clear objective and sub-objectives will facilitate the entire planning process and is an appropriate first step. An outreach program needs to have one major goal, Smith and Harris (1984) stipulated. While other supplementary goals may also be achieved, the design of the program should be dictated by the main objective. Here is a list of goals frequently served by outreach programs:

1. To increase communication between advocate and child;

2. to provide an opportunity for adults to gain information about the school reading program;

3. to teach advocates to help children with specific reading-related tasks;

4. to promote children's reading at home;

5. to increase adult modeling of reading in the home;

6. to get more books or reading materials in the home;

7. to promote conditions for children to study more effectively at home;

8. to enlist the support of advocates as school volunteers in the classroom;

9. to enlist parent involvement in program governance.

When program objectives have been identified along with a target population, planners are ready to select a program strategy. The Right to Read program sponsored by the state of Idaho in 1977-78, capitalized on the formula, "Read to your Children Fifteen Minutes a Day." This slogan was circulated by bookmarks, bumper stickers, and radio and TV spots. Schools and libraries compiled lists of seasonal books for family reading aloud. Certificates were awarded to families who could present coupons that they read together 15 minutes a day, 5 days a week, for 9 weeks. (Smith & Harris, 1984).

A program in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania focused on participation in family communication rituals. Sharing and communicating feelings were a major purpose of this program, which provided child advocates with a 10 week course on family communication, and a series of activity sheets on which to base daily family interaction rituals. A song title ritual, for example, engaged families in chanting and naming favorite songs, choosing song titles to describe the family, and writing a family song. (Grant & Sleeter, 1986).

Most strategies for family interaction are designed to supplement or support school instruction. The New Approach Method, piloted in the Trenton, New Jersey schools, gives the advocate the central instructional role. Daily reading instruction is offered children at school by their advocates via tape recordings. (Grant & Sleeter, 1986).

Successful family interaction seems best guaranteed in programs that provide concrete and specific directions. Continuing efforts to foster advocate involvement in the school development of reading and language are bound to occur. The wide variety of programs that have already evolved, attest to the creative energy devoted to this concern. Few movements have the potential of family and other advocate involvement for supporting the learning of children. Thoughtful planning can best insure that outreach programs will see this potential realized. (Grant & Sleeter, 1986).

In the "Show Me" state, a project demonstrated that well-trained moms and dads can rear more competent children. The "New Parents as Teachers" project in Missouri was based on the idea that a great deal of important learning takes place during the first 3 years of life, and that if home is the first school house and parents are the first teachers, they will have a better chance of doing that job well. (Myerhoff & White, 1986).

The roots of the project go back to the early 1960s when an increasing number of parents and educators began to realize that many children were already "educationally disadvantaged" by the time they entered kindergarten. Myerhoff and White (1986) stated that their research with the Harvard Preschool Project, which began in 1965, identified a large sample of preschool children, who, by anyone's definition and in everyone's opinion, were, "most likely to succeed." They came from a wide range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, but shared a variety of intellectual, linguistic, and social skills that clearly set them apart from their average and below-average peers. It soon became clear that they were exhibiting this impressive pattern of abilities by the time they were 3 years old.

Myerhoff and White (1986) reported that they interviewed the families of these children to find out which ones were expecting another child. When the new infants were between 1 and 3 years old, they began visiting their homes every other week and recording everything they could about their experiences and the childrearing practices of their parents. Later they took what they had learned, combined it with the research of other developmental psychologists, and translated it into information and support programs for new parents.

With this in mind, Myerhoff and White (1986) established the Center for Parent Education in Newton, Massachusetts. The primary goals were to increase public awareness of these issues, and to provide resource, consulting, and training services to professionals concerned with the education of children during the first 3 years of life. They were especially interested in those who wanted to work with parents in their role as a child's first and most important teacher.

Involvement is the key to success in any parent project, yet is is not always easy to get parents involved. Some are hesitant to come to school because they have limited command of English. Some are working in single parent households. Others have limited or poor experience with schools. Yet, clearly, parent involvement contributes to student success. (Myerhoff and White, 1986).

Sasoka (1984) discussed how language specialists in her school made presentations on ways parents could help their children at home with school subjects. Parents were enthusiastic, asked for another meeting, and promised to bring a friend. However, the "tell me, I forgot" syndrome occurred, enthusiasm waned, and parent participation dwindled. The specialists held a workshop where parents were shown how to make learning games. Parents enjoyed the activity, helped one another, and left feeling proud of their treasures; and the children enjoyed

the games. "Show me, I remember" characterized a phase of Sasoka's parent project.

Sasoka further stated that they wanted to reach even more parents. Remembering that parents are most responsive when their children are involved, the program specialist suggested a carnival--not for fundraising--but a carnival with learning games.

The students created the carnival atmosphere in the library with balloons and artwork (circus or carnival scenes). After the carnival, everyone gathered in the school cafeteria for a drawing to give away the teacher-made game boards. For those interested, a workshop was held to make many of the carnival games. Parents had fun playing games with their children and were amazed at how much their children knew and were eager to learn.

This helped parents to understand how to help their children, why it is important to help, and how much pleasure comes from working with their children. The learning carnival was a fine vehicle for parent involvement. Sasoka stated, "We involved them, they understood." (Sasoka, 1985, p. 244).

Parents are "remarkably positive" toward the public elementary schools and their children's teachers, but schools could do more to involve parents in helping their children at home, according to a recent study by Johns Hopkins University. (Epstein, 1984).

Parents were most often asked by teachers to aid their children in the following ways: to read aloud or listen to the child read, to talk with the child about the school day, to conduct drills in spelling or math, to help with worksheets, and to sign homework. However, Epstein (1984) stated that from one fourth to two-fifths of the parents surveyed were "never" asked to take part in these activities. Almost 30% felt that they did not have enough training to help their children with reading and math, while over 80% said they would spend more time at such tasks if they were shown how to do specific home-learning activities.

Epstein further stated that although most parents are involved in daily activities for short periods of time with their children's school work, very few are active at school. Almost 70% "never" helped in the classroom, on class trips, or with fundraising projects.

Teachers who work at parent involvement and family/ school communications are given markedly higher ratings by parents. The message for teachers is that many parents would benefit from direction or ideas from the teacher that could be useful for the child's progress in school. (Epstein, 1984).

Safran (1986) stated that whether or not your child does well in school may, in large part, depend on you. Here is how you can both achieve high marks. How smart is

your child? How much can he learn? How high can she climb? Until now, school children seemed frozen in place. An average child in second or third grade paddled along, just fair to middling, until graduation from high school. A poor student languished at the bottom of each successive class. Studies showed that more than 4 out of 5 students began and ended school at the same level of performance.

In Safran's (1986) view, it does not have to be that way. In 1981, according to Safran, Benjamin S. Bloom, a professor of education at the University of Chicago and at Northwestern University, supervised two separate research projects. In each, children were selected at random and provided with private teachers. With this one-to-one instruction, below average children out performed 98% of the boys and girls in conventional classrooms. What one child can learn, Bloom concluded, almost all children can learn under the right conditions.

Bloom and several of his graduate students identified and tested six remarkably simple ideas aimed at reproducing in the classroom the most effective components of one-to-one instruction: attention, support, feedback, encouragement, and self-esteem. The ideas were practical and affordable, and included things parents could do at home, as well as changes they could propose for the classroom. He and his associates also developed a questionnaire to determine the educational quality of a

child's home environment. The results correlated cosely with a child's success in school. (Safran, 1986).

According to the experts, what happens in your home is a better predictor of success in school than is any I.Q. or achievement test. In the homes of top achievers, homework and reading are given priority over play or television. Parents encourage their children's intellectual interest and praise school achievement. Family members talk together and do things together. (Safran, 1986).

The home environment has great impact on how a child learns. It is as important as the quality of teachers or curriculum. Inside almost every poor to average child is a smart kid yearning to get out. With these ideas, we can help to unlock that potential.

Spratling (1985) stated that children whose parents are the most involved in their lives appear to be those with the highest grades in school. Parents who monitor their children's homework, reinforce the importance of home, which often results in high academic performance.

Powell (1986) reported that studies of parent education programs have found strong short-term effects on children. Children's I.Q. were examined frequently and were found to increase as an apparent result of the

parent's program participation. R. C. Howell (1979) and P. L. Howell (1979) stated that a good rapport with parents will result by approaching them positively and keeping them informed of important events, good or bad, as they occur. Parents need, and generally want to be informed of their childrens' progress.

Kerckhoff (1980) tends to support the same ideas of other authors (in the review of the literature) that the more involved parents become in helping their children to learn, the more successful they will become. He also believes that as more children are raised in families with parents who had acquired high school or college education, more children are likely to advance further in their schooling.

In a recent article ("Children's Education," 1986), it was stated that many parents want to be involved in their children's education, but they often don't know what to do or how to get started. To solve the problem, the National PTA developed suggestions for parents. Among the suggestions made to parents were that they establish homework routine early, and distinguish between showing an interest in the child's homework and actually doing it for him or her. Some suggested ways to establish a homework routine for their children are to:

1. Set a regular time and place for studying. In primary grades, take 10 minutes daily to read and talk to

your child before doing homework. In the upper elementary grades, set aside a half hour for studying and reviewing.

2. If the homework includes directions, read them or have your child read them aloud. Make sure the child is following the directions. If not, demonstrate an example, try one together, then have the child try one alone.

3. When the child is finished, check the work and circle errors to be corrected. Sign the homework. This will help foster the home/school connection.

4. If the parent does not understand an assignment that the child received, ask the teacher for clarification. The parent should write notes to teachers from time to time indicating what they have observed about the child's homework progress. ("Children's Education," 1986).

Hoffman (1982) reported that research has confirmed that what parents view as being important for their children to learn and how they believe their children learn, can be seen in both the learning opportunities parents provide in the home and the strategies that they use in teaching their children.

In another research report, Martinez (1981) assessed the home environment by giving the guardians of 73 fifth-grade children a questionnaire. The purpose was to identify those home environment variables that predicted academic achievement. The questionnaire covered parents' level of education; size of the family; what language

family members used to speak to each other; what learning materials were in the home; encouragement of children to read; parents' desire toward education and the child's future employment; parents trust in the school; stability of the home, and income levels. Step-wide multiple regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between home environment and academic achievement.

Gordon (1979) reported on the assessment of parent involvement in a Parent Education Follow Through Program (PEFT) which focused on the development of a home/school/community partnership and stressed the importance of the home learning situation. A pluralistic evaluative approach was used to assess the program. Data was selected for a case study in many PEFT communities, as indicators of the program's impact on social systems' impinging on the parent/child relationship. This included employment, political activity, cross cultural communication, and general family services. Descriptive data focusing on home visitation by paraprofessionals, parental decision making, attendance at meetings and activities, and parental classroom volunteering were collected and analyzed.

In the review of the literature, there were several helpful books and guides for parents' use. Eaton (1978) provided learning activities and suggestions for improving the reading abilities and skills of children in the intermediate grades. The areas Eaton covered included

helping the child build self-confidence, the library, children's books, survival vocabulary, listening activities, and many other areas.

Fukuda (1976) provided a bilingual booklet (English-Chinese) which contained a variety of suggestions for activities for parents to do with their children to supplement the school program. It was divided into 12 "monthly letters" with 4 to 6 ideas for each month. It included many activities such as outings to the library and to the park; playing games; making handicrafts; coloring and painting; reading picture stories and simple words; cooking; and doing practical life exercises, such as setting the table and sorting the laundry.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOME AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goals of this practicum were to:

1. Encourage parents of a 4th-grade class to become more actively involved in helping their children to learn at home as well as at school by attending PTC and other school related activities.

2. Provide home visitation to help in establishing a home curriculum, and to give support to parents who may need help in assisting their children with homework.

Behavioral Expectations

The following behavior expectations were used for this practicum:

1. More parents would attend monthly PTC meetings.

2. More parents would attend parent/teacher conferences, regularly.

3. Parents would become more helpful in assisting their children with homework assignments by permitting a home curriculum program to be developed in their homes.

4. A support team would meet with parents twice monthly to discuss problems.

5. Parents would monitor homework assignments.

6. All parents would participate in a Mother/Father Day program.

Standards of Performance

The following standards of performance were expected:

1. Twenty out of 25 parents would attend two out of three PTC meetings.

2. Twenty out of 25 parents would attend four out of five parent/teacher conferences for the duration of this practicum.

3. Out of 25 parents, 16 would return questionnaires in favor of developing a home curriculum for their homes.

4. The writer would set up home curricula in 11 out of 16 homes.

5. Out of 25 parents, 23 would attend each meeting.

6. Twenty-three out of 25 students would complete homework assignments with a successful passing grade of C.

7. By the end of the practicum, 25 students would be represented by a parent or parent designee in a Mother/Father Day program.

Assessment Instruments

The following assessment instruments were used:

1. A PTC attendance record was kept for each month.

2. A record was kept of parents' attendance at each parent/teacher conference.

3. Parents completed a questionnaire consisting of 11 questions for developing a home curriculum (see Appendix B).

4. Attendance of each parent was recorded upon conclusion of each meeting with the support team.

5. Students' daily homework grades were recorded in the teacher's grade book.

6. Parents completed an evaluation form at the end of the program.

A daily log was used as a mechanism for recording unexpected responses and deviations from implementation plans. The log recorded positive responses as well as problems that occurred during implementation.

Description of Plans for Analyzing Results

The results of this practicum were analyzed and presented as follows:

1. The PTC attendance record was used to encourage parents to become involved in PTC work, such as: serving on committees; assisting teachers in classrooms; assisting with programs; assisting in the cafeteria; and assisting on school grounds on special occasions. This record keeping lasted for the duration of the practicum.

2. Attendance of parents was recorded at each parent/teacher conference to improve parent/teacher relationship. The results let teachers pinpoint the parents who needed

encouragement to attend parent conferences. This record keeping was for the duration of the practicum.

3. Parents completed an 11 question questionnaire for developing a home curriculum (see Appendix B).

4. Attendance of each parent was recorded upon conclusion of each meeting with the support team. The support team consisted of two paraprofessionals and three parents who were actively involved in school activities. The results of this record keeping enabled the support team to know who the parents were who needed help.

5. Students' daily homework grades were recorded in the teacher's grade book so the teacher was made aware of students who needed help at home. For this instrument, a telephone hotline was available. Parents were encouraged to call the hotline to ask for help. The two paraprofessionals alternately answered the telephone from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. each evening. After 5 p.m., one of the three parents was available for answering questions and giving help.

6. Parents participated in a Mother/Father Day program. An evaluation form was completed at the end of the program, assessments were made of the program and the evaluation of parental reaction to the program.

The behavioral expectations, standards of performance, and assessment instruments are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Summary of Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Behaviorial Expectation (What do you expect to achieve?)	Standard of Performance (What will you accept as demonstrating success?)	Assessment Instruments (What will you use to measure?)	Plans for Analyzing Results
More parents will attend monthly PTC meetings.	20 out of 25 parents will attend 2 out of 3 PTC meetings.	A PTC record will be kept for each month of parents attendance.	The PTC attendance record will be used to encourage parents to become involved in PTC work such as: serving on committees assisting teachers in classrooms, assisting with programs, assisting in the cafeteria, and assisting on school grounds on special occasions. This record keeping will last for the duration of the practicum.
More parents will attend parent/teacher conferences regularly.	20 out of 25 parents will attend 5 out of 5 parent/ teacher conferences.	A record will be kept of parents attendance at each parent/teacher conference.	Recording attendance of parents at each conference to improve parent/teacher relationship. The results will let teachers pinpoint the parents who need encouraging to come for parent conferences. This record keeping is for the duration of the practicum.

TABLE 4 (continued)

Behavioral Expectation (What do you expect to achieve?)	Standard of Performance (What will you accept as demonstrating success?)	Assessment Instruments (What will you use to measure?)	Plans for Analyzing Results
Parents will become more helpful in helping their children with homework assignments by permitting a home curriculum program to be developed in their homes.	16 out of 25 parents will return questionnaires favorably to developing a home curriculum for their homes.	Parents will complete a questionnaire consisting of 11 questions for developing a home curriculum (see Appendix B).	Parents will complete an eleven question questionnaire for developing a home curriculum. Parents will respond with a yes or no answer (see Appendix B).
A support team will meet with parents twice monthly to discuss any problems.	20 out of 25 parents will be in attendance at each meeting.	Attendance of each parent will be recorded upon conclusion of each meeting with support team.	Attendance of each parent will be recorded upon conclusion of each meeting with the support team. The support team will consist of two paraprofessionals and three parents who are very actively involved in the school activities. The results of this record keeping will enable the support team to know who the parents are who may need help.
Parents will monitor homework assignments.	23 out of 25 students will complete homework assignments with a successful passing grade of C.	Students daily homework grades will be recorded in teacher's gradebook.	Students daily homework grades will be recorded in teacher's gradebook so the teacher will be aware of students who may

TABLE 4 (continued)

Behavioral Expectation (What do you expect to achieve?)	Standard of Performance (What will you accept as demonstrating success?)	Assessment Instruments What will you use to measure?)	Plans for Analyzing Results
			need help at home. For this instrument, a telephone hotline will be available. Parents will be encouraged to call the hotline asking for help. The two paraprofessionals will alternately man the telephone from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. each evening. After 5 p.m., one of the three parents will be available for answering questions and giving help.
All parents will participate in a Mother/ Father Day Program.	By the end of the practicum, 25 students will be represented by a parent or parent designee in a Mother/ Father Day program.	Parents will complete an evaluation form at the end of the program.	Parents will participate in a Mother/Father Day program. An evaluation form will be completed at the end of the program to make assessments of the program, and evaluate parental reaction to the program.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Parental involvement in helping children to learn is a long standing issue. Many parents of school age children do not become actively involved in their children's learning.

Debruyn (1986) stated various ways in which to involve parents. First, he stated that teachers must admit that they really want support, involvement, or both. It is possible to gain support without involvement, but doing so requires giving parents frequent and comprehensive information about what is being done and why. Too, teachers need to realize that support is easier to acquire with involvement because personal investment and hands-on experience help parents to want to give their support. As teachers decide what they want, they need to be aware that children do better and consider school more important when parents are involved. Second, decide what type of involvement is wanted and develop a plan to get it.

There are several levels of involvement. One may want periodic individual contact; one may want group meetings in which information is offered. Volunteers may be useful to help with certain tasks. Each level of involvement requires specific techniques.

Debruyn (1986) gave guidelines to help keep parents interested. First, parents should be kept informed about what is happening in the classroom. This requires comprehensive reporting through notes, class newsletters, and requests for specific kinds of help. Second, communicate with parents individually on a regular basis. He said that teachers must remember that group communication is important; it is never as successful in general involvement as individual communication. Therefore, class newsletters and bulletins should seek to inform but should not be expected to draw parent involvement. Third, create a consistent plan. Teachers should be available at specific times for conferences, and schedule times for class visits. They should make telephone calls and send notes and class newsletters at regular intervals. Fourth, design every meeting to get and give information, create active participation, and show parents how to help their children learn. A tone of mutual need and shared responsibility is a must. Finally, teachers can recognize that parents' involvement may pertain only to their child or to the whole class. In both instances, however, parents can be taught the benefits of involvement to them, their child, and all children.

The writer noted that the guidelines that Debruyn (1986) discussed would be appropriate for this problem because the school district in which she works has

implemented a parent program. The writer thinks that more should be done through the development of parent programs in each individual school to meet the needs of parents in that particular school.

There were many distractions for parents in the writer's geographical area that caused parents to become less and less involved. Loss of jobs and homes, worrying about how they would provide food and clothing for their children, and loss of self-worthiness were only a few of the many distractions with which parents had to cope.

Kelly (1980) discussed a curriculum of the home. In order to enrich the curriculum of the home, some parents provide books, supplies, and a special place for studying; they observe routines for meals, bedtime, and homework; and monitor the amount of time spent watching TV and performing after school tasks. Parents stay aware of their children's lives when they discuss school events, help children meet deadlines, and talk with their children about school problems and successes. Kelly also stated that a growing body of research supports the conclusion that the home may be the single most important factor in determining how much and how well a child learns.

Grant and Sleeter (1986) stated that many educators have discussed the importance of the home as an influence on how well children do in school. Recognizing the

importance of its impact, school staff members usually have some knowledge and beliefs about their students' homes and the kind of influence those homes and the wider community exert. In Grant and Sleeter's study, they pointed out the importance of the school and community and its effect on parental involvement. They described the community as "quite stable"; since many of the adults grew up in this community and remained, they therefore, felt a sense of loyalty to it.

The researchers continued developing a working relationship between the school and community and the need for encouragement to get parents to work with each other to improve the school. To promote a more active school/ community relationship, those involved in this study planned and initiated several activities such as a community council of parents and a school community pride day.

One of the behavioral expectations of this practicum was to develop a home curriculum. A home curriculum was needed because children in the writer's work setting were experiencing difficulty in creative writing, oral language, and reading and math skills. Many times children came to school unprepared. Developing a home curriculum would not only help the children, but parents would become actively involved in their children's learning.

Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher (1976) cited many strategies for involving parents and bringing about closer contact. They successfully used the following solutions:

1. Asked mothers to be present at physical examinations of their elementary school children;

2. Gave teas or coffee "klatches" for mothers of preschool children;

3. Had night sessions so that fathers could attend classes;

4. Opened the gymnasium and other school facilities to parents for recreational purposes;

5. Had a telephone manned in the evening for questions from parents or citizens;

6. Invited parents to observe their children in activities related to classwork;

7. Arranged meetings in the school library for advising parents on books they might wish to purchase for their children;

8. Asked parents to help with birthday parties and similar events for elementary school students.

Most of the solutions cited by Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher (1976) were appropriate for the problem stated in this practicum. For example, having night session classes so that fathers could attend was an excellent solution, because fathers and grandfathers play an important role in the community where this practicum took

place. The mother was sometimes the only one in the household who was employed, the father, then, became the caregiver. Therefore, fathers benefited from night session classes. The classes provided training needed for helping children with their school work. In other cases, when fathers and mothers worked different shifts, the father's shift permitted him to attend classes. He was the one who came to school to conference with the teacher. Through night session classes, fathers were better prepared to help their children at home and at school.

Grandfathers in this community also had an active role. In many instances they performed the duties of babysitting. They came for the children after school, they came for the children if they became ill during the day, and they attended conferences when needed, during the school day. This was a unique approach and offered an opportunity for the grandfather to become actively involved in helping children to learn. Many of the homes in the community were without fathers, and the grandfathers provided a father image to all of the children at school.

Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher (1976), and the writer shared a similar idea by having a telephone manned after school for questions from parents or citizens. One of the behavioral expectations of this practicum was to have a support team to man a telephone hotline for parents to call if there were questions concerning homework. This

was a great help in enhancing parental involvement. The literature stated that parents should be invited to observe their children in activities related to classwork.

Parents could have arranged with the teacher to come to school or they could have been invited by the teacher to come and observe their children in classwork activities. This is a standard policy in the writer's school district, but most parents did not take advantage of the opportunity. This solution would have been appropriate and helpful if parents had been inspired to take advantage of the opportunity.

Arranging meetings in the school library to advise parents on books they might wish to purchase for their children was an excellent idea. Here again, the literature supported the writer's views. Each year, the PTC sponsored a book fair in the library of the writer's school. Parents could come to help their children select books or purchase books for their children. Only a few parents came to school to help with the book fair or to help their children select books.

The writer believes that the solution cited in the literature could bring about more parental involvement in helping children to learn.

Description of Selected Solution

Increasing parental involvement in helping children to learn was the main goal of this practicum. Through the

development of a home curriculum--encouraging parents to attend PTC and parent conferences, and visiting the school on a regular basis--the writer attempted to meet these goals. The approval and support of the building principal was enlisted so that the implementation of this practicum could operate smoothly.

It was believed that the solution selection was most effective because of the approach used. The approach was different from any that had been attempted in the school district. The approach was more personal because the main objective was to bring about a partnership.

The writer became an active participant by providing a hands-on approach. The support team became visible in the school community and continued to encourage parents to become involved.

The writer initiated the following as appropriate solution strategy:

1. Three monthly meetings were set up and approximately 20 parents attended.

2. The help of the PTC president and secretary was enlisted to assist in improving parents' attendance. The parents signed in at the beginning of each meeting.

3. Parents were encouraged through a newsletter and a telephone call once each month to become involved in PTC work. Parents were asked to assist in the classroom, help with programs, and to serve

on committees as often as they could. A record was kept of the number of hours parents' served.

4. Certificates of Attendance were awarded to all parents who attended PTC meetings. A service award was awarded to the parent with the most hours of service.

5. A support team was selected to assist parents. The support team consisted of the writer, two paraprofessionals, and three parent volunteers.

6. Parents were encouraged by the support team to initiate conferences and to visit the school on a regular basis.

7. A home curriculum was developed to reinforce writing, oral language, spelling, reading, and math skills. Parents who participated responded favorably to the survey.

8. The paraprofessionals and the parent volunteers manned a telephone hotline to provide help for parents who could not understand the task that their children were asked to perform at home.

9. The telephone hotline was available each day from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. The paraprofessionals alternately answered the telephone from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. each day except Friday. No homework was given on Friday.

10. One of the three parent volunteers was available for answering the telephone from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. each day.

11. The writer visited eight homes 2 days a week after school, spending 20 to 30 minutes each day. Parents were called before each visit.

12. The writer was available to answer questions from the paraprofessionals or the parent volunteers from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. each day.

13. Parents were encouraged by the support team to call the hotline rather than the children, even though childrens' calls were accepted. Paraprofessionals, and parent volunteers used their home telephones.

14. Homework grades were recorded in the gradebook.

15. There were two informational meetings held each month of implementation. The meetings were held at Ponderosa and Wendy's restaurants. Two meetings were designated as breakfast meetings. Breakfast was paid for by donations.

16. Arrangements were made for activities prior to each meeting. Arrangements were made for guest speakers; and a visit was made to the Parent Resource Center. Handout materials were provided at each meeting.

17. A culmination program called Mother/Father Day was presented.

18. An evaluation form was given to parents at the end of the program (see Appendix C).

19. The evaluation forms were used by the writer to help determine the effectiveness of parental involvement in this 4th-grade class.

Report of Action Taken

The writer's practicum was implemented in two phases: getting parents involved in helping their children to learn through the development of a home curriculum and by encouraging parents to attend PTC and parent conferences regularly.

Before implementation, the writer met with the PTC president to plan the dates and time for three monthly meetings for parents to attend. After the meeting, letters were sent home to parents. A parent survey (see Appendix B) was taken to determine how many parents would be interested in a home curriculum developed in their home. There were 16 parents who favored a home curriculum.

To assist parents with the home curriculum, a support team was organized. The support team consisted of a parent, a paraprofessional, and the writer. At this point, permission was granted by the principal to implement the program. Letters were sent to parents to schedule home visits. A schedule was also prepared for the support team. The support team would take care of manning the telephone, and answering questions from parents.

The implementation began in February, 1987. Letters were sent home by the children asking parents to become involved in classroom activities for three months, and they would be given credit for having attended a PTC meeting.

There were five parent teacher conferences scheduled for the three months. Two were planned for the first and second month, and one for the third month. For the first and second month, parents were asked to initiate the conference. Each month that parents visited the school to participate in PTC, they were also asked to spend about 5 to 10 minutes in conference with the writer. This was recorded as having attended a parent/teacher conference. Letters were sent to parents the third month indicating that activities had been planned.

The first activity was preparation for the science fair. A letter was sent soliciting parents who had an interest in science, art, language, and handwriting. They assisted the children in preparing for the school's science fair. Parents with various interests volunteered. One parent demonstrated how to use the microscope to a group of children. Another parent demonstrated to a small group of children how to use the computer with their projects. Parents also helped the children to organize their ideas on paper. One mother and father team ran errands for the class. One day they made seven trips to

an art supply store. There were also parents working with other small groups on the final phases of their projects. Parents were permitted to come any time of the school day to work with a group of children for one week. This procedure accomodated those parents who could come only one day or those who were able to come more than one day.

Other activities were created to keep the interest and the involvement growing and permanent. The second activity followed immediately. It was scheduled for one week. This activity involved parents in creating shared projects for the enhancement of the home curriculum. The rules stipulated that all materials or games must be made at home by the children under supervision of their parents. The parents were contacted by this writer and scheduled for classroom visitation, for the purpose of viewing all of the projects. During this visit, attendance was recorded for the PTC record.

The third activity was a sharing day for parents. Parents who had to work, arranged to participate by coming before school or in the afternoon. Parents were able to make suggestions, share ideas, and pick up handouts and other materials that might be helpful to them to use at home in helping their children. The principal made available to parents books which were not being used in the classroom for home use.

These approaches were used in lieu of parents attending PTC meetings. It fulfilled the goal of increasing PTC attendance.

The home curriculum questionnaires that were returned by parents were evaluated. The 16 parents who were in favor of a home curriculum to help their children improve homework habits were scheduled for home visits. The writer visited 16 homes--8 on Tuesday and 8 on Wednesday--for the duration of the practicum. The allotted time for each home was 20 to 30 minutes. Parents were asked in advance of the first visit to designate a place to be called the study area. Parents were told that the study area could be the corner of the kitchen table, the living room, bedroom, or any small area that was conducive for studying. The parents were also instructed to be available for assisting their children with homework for at least 20 to 30 minutes each day. Parents were shown how to help with language, spelling, reading, math, and writing skills.

A telephone hotline was available each day from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. The parents used the hotline to call when they had questions concerning homework. A paraprofessional was available from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. each day except on Fridays. The writer was available to answer questions from the paraprofessionals or the parent volunteer, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. each day.

Parents were encouraged by the support team to call the hotline rather than their children. Parents were also encouraged by the support team to initiate conferences and to visit the school on a regular basis. Approximately six to seven parents used the hotline on a daily basis the first month. Parents also formed a network of their own by telephoning each other to discuss homework assignments, and provide ways to help each other. This caused a decline in the number of telephone calls that were received during the second and third months.

The support team assisted the parents twice monthly by sponsoring informational meetings with parents and their families. These meetings took place for three months. They were held at Wendy's, Ponderosa, and Pizza Hut restaurants. Breakfast was planned for two of the meetings. The writer arranged for activities prior to each meeting. Arrangements were also made for guest speakers, and a visit was made to the school corporation's Parent Resource Center. The parents also attended a conference for parents. The conference was sponsored by the Indiana ECIA Chapter I, at Indiana University Northwest. Handout materials were available at all meetings. These meetings were well attended by parents and family members. Donations and discounts by the restaurant managers were given to help defray the cost for food.

The program concluded with parents participating in an awards program. Mothers and fathers were asked to attend. The writer's classroom was converted into a mini auditorium and was decorated to enhance the occasion for the parents of children who had participated in the home curriculum. As each parent entered the classroom, he/she was greeted by his/her child. Certificates were presented to parents by the children for perfect attendance, services rendered, and most outstanding mother and father. The most outstanding mother and father attended all meetings, assisted in all school activities, and assisted in the classroom.

At the end of the program, parents were asked to evaluate the entire program by answering questions on an evaluation form (see Appendix C). Data from the evaluation form was used by the writer to help determine the effectiveness of parental involvement in this 4th-grade class. The writer telephoned parents who did not attend the Mother/Father Day program. Arrangements were made for them to be awarded certificates for participating in the other activities. Evaluation forms were also made available to them to complete.

The original design of the program had to be altered to meet the needs of the parents, therefore, the results were not as conclusive as the writer had proposed. All parents did not participate in the Mother/Father Day

program. There were 8 parents in attendance on the day of the program and 10 on the next established date. Looking at the outcome of this objective, more flex-time was needed in the planning, and will be included in future planning.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

This practicum was designed to provide ways in which parents of a 4th-grade class could become more actively involved in helping their children to learn at home. To help determine the degree of parental involvement needed in helping their children to learn and their participation in school activities, the writer sent notices (see Appendix A) in September, October, and November (1986), asking parents to attend PTC meetings. Attendance was recorded at these three meetings. The results show (see Table 1) that in September, 7 out of 26 parents responded to the notice, and 4 parents attended the meeting. In October, 10 out of 28 parents responded, and 8 parents attended. In November, 6 out of 25 parents responded and 4 parents attended.

To further determine the degree of parental involvement in school activities, the writer investigated the attendance of these parents when their children were in first, second, and third grades. The results (see Table 1) indicate that the parents' attendance decreased tremendously each year.

A parent survey (see Appendix B) was taken to determine how many of the 25 parents of the 4th-grade children were interested in a home curriculum developed in their homes. Of the 25, only 16 parents returned the questionnaire in favor of a home curriculum. To assist parents with the home curriculum, a support team was organized. The support team consisted of a parent, a paraprofessional, and the writer. The team was available to answer questions or to clarify any homework assignment by telephone. The support team also met twice monthly to discuss problems and to provide resources. The team was able to help parents monitor the childrens' homework assignments, and the children came to school better prepared.

At the end of the school year (1987), parents participated in a Mother/Father Day program. The children presented their parents with Certificates of Participation, perfect attendance certificates, and the Most Outstanding Mother and Father awards.

Objectives were established and met to increase parental involvement in school activities. The first objective was to get more parents involved in PTC meetings. The writer planned three activities for 3 months which were held in the classroom, in lieu of those parents who had already participated that month by attending PTC meetings.

The first activity was preparation for the science fair. Parents assisted the children with projects to be entered in the science fair. This procedure accommodated those parents who could come only one day or those who were able to come more than one day.

Other activities were created to keep the interest and the involvement growing and permanent. The second activity was scheduled for one week. This activity involved parents in creating shared projects for the enhancement of the home curriculum. The children made games and other projects at home under the supervision of parents. After all games and projects were completed, parents were asked to come to school to view the childrens' work. Attendance was recorded for PTC records.

The third activity was a sharing day for parents. Parents arranged to participate by coming before school or in the afternoon. Parents shared ideas, made suggestions, and shared materials that were helpful in the home curriculum.

The three approaches used in lieu of parents attending PTC meetings revealed that there was an increase in parent involvement and interest. It fulfilled the goal of increasing PTC attendance.

The following data indicate that the parents of this writer's class not only became involved, but had begun to show a genuine interest in the PTC organization

and also in their children's school activities and learning.

For the first month, 20 out of 25 parents participated. In the second month, the 16 parents who participated in the home curriculum were in attendance. The nine children whose parents did not participate in the home curriculum also had something on display in the classroom. In the third month, all 25 parents participated because of the flexibility in the schedule.

These three approaches provided the proper flex-time that was needed to motivate the parents' interest in their children's school. It caused them to individually schedule what was appropriate or possible for them. They were encouraged by telephone, home visits by the writer, and through the exchange of ideas with other parents. Everyone felt right at home in the school situation.

The final data revealed that three-fourths of the parents of the writer's class now had expressed an eagerness to be a part of the PTC and to assist not just their children but to work so that all children could grow towards the goal of excellence. This became a very convenient way to hold individual conferences with the parents. Parents appeared more relaxed and anxious to discuss their children's problems. They also expressed a willingness to work with the writer for a solution to

any problems that the child might have. These methods created a deep bond or partnership between the writer's class and their parents.

The previous methods discussed set the stage for the high enthusiasm of the parents and for meeting the goal of the second objective that more parents attended the parent/teacher conferences regularly.

The implication here is that by being innovative in the approach to PTC meetings, parents can be motivated. Through this approach, the writer had parents on hand for quick conferences concerning their children. It also implies that parents do want to become involved, but sometimes they don't quite know how to go about doing it.

The results went beyond expectation. There were five parent/teacher conferences scheduled, two for the first and second month, and one for the third month. Each month parents visited the school to participate in activities for PTC. They were also asked to spend about 5 to 10 minutes in a conference with the writer. This was recorded as having attended a parent/teacher conference.

For the first and second month, parents were asked to initiate a conference. For these 2 months, 24 out of 25 parents initiated a conference. The third month, for the last activity planned, all 25 parents were recorded as having attended a parent/teacher conference.

The implications indicate the flexibility in planning and allowing parents to visit the school at their convenience, and created the possibility of more parental involvement.

Parents' enthusiasm was so high that they began to stop at school before going to work. Some parents left instructions with their children as to their care after school. Others stated that they were stopping to see how their children were progressing and if they were creating any problems. There were parents who came to the school at the end of the day just to ask, "How are things going?"

To meet the goal of the third objective, a home curriculum was developed by the writer to reinforce writing, language, spelling, reading, and math skills. Sixteen parents participated. The writer prepared a schedule for home visitation after school and organized a support team to assist parents. The support team consisted of the writer, a paraprofessional, and a parent volunteer. The writer visited eight homes 2 days a week after school, spending 20 to 30 minutes each day. Parents were asked in advance of the first visit to designate a place to be called a study area. Parents were told that the study area could be the corner of the kitchen table, the living room, bedroom, or any small area that was conducive for studying. The parents were

also instructed to be available for assisting their children with homework for at least 20 to 30 minutes each day.

Children coming to school with homework completed improved the first month. Fourteen out of the 16 children completed homework each day, and 2 of the 9 children whose parents were not involved in the home curriculum, came to school with homework completed. The second month, all 16 children came to school with homework completed, and 5 of the 9 children came with their homework completed. The third month, all 16 children came with homework completed and all of the 9 children returned with their homework completed.

Parents who were not involved in the home curriculum expressed their desire to be included. Their comments were valuable in assessing the effectiveness of the program. Some of the comments were: "I wish I had been involved in the home curriculum." "Where do you sign up for the program?" "May I be involved in the program next year?" "I wish you could be my child's teacher in fifth grade." "Will the school be involved in the program next year?"

The results clearly implied that parents were involved and did monitor homework assignments. Homework assignments were completed, and 23 out of 25 children received passing grades. All of the 16 children whose

parents participated in the home curriculum received passing grades.

The final objective was met through a program for mothers and fathers. The program was designed to compliment the fifth grade graduation ceremony. People from the community and school district were invited.

At the end of the program, parents were asked to evaluate the entire program (see Appendix C). Data from the evaluation was used to help determine how effective the program had been. Of the 25 parents involved in the program only 18 parents completed the evaluation forms. There were 5 items parents were asked to respond to (see Table 5). Item number one, 18 parents responded very worthwhile. Item number two, 14 parents responded very worthwhile and 4 responded worthwhile. Item number three, 18 parents responded very worthwhile. Item number four, 16 parents responded very worthwhile and 2 responded worthwhile. Item number five, 18 parents responded very worthwhile.

As can be seen from the data, parents felt very good about the program.

Table 5

Home Curriculum Evaluation Form

Item Number*	Parent Responses: Satisfactory**	Worthwhile**	Very Worthwhile**	Yes Response***	No Response***
1			18		
2		4	14		
3			18		
4		2	16		
5					18

* The item numbers on the table refer to the same numbers for the question on the survey.

** Satisfactory, worthwhile, and very worthwhile refer to the number of parents who answered with those responses on the survey.

*** Yes and No responses refer to the number of parents who answered yes or no on the survey.

Conclusions

Getting parents involved is the key to success in helping children to learn. Although it was not easy getting parents involved because of: conflicts in their work schedules; situations where the parent worked in single parent households; the depressed economic conditions of the area; and some of the parents' limited use of English, those involved were able to meet the objectives and goals of this practicum.

Parent involvement clearly contributed to their children's success in school, and parents became more actively involved in helping their children to learn

at home as well as at school. Parents who monitored their children's homework and became involved in school activities, obviously helped to reinforce the importance of school, which brought about academic success for their children.

Parents attended the montly PTC meetings and the classroom parent/teacher conferences regularly; and they participated in classroom and other school-related activities. Home visits were made, home curriculums were developed, and support was provided to parents who needed help in understanding their children's homework assignments. Resource persons and materials were made available to the parents.

The writer believes that the solutions selected were effective because of the approach, which allowed for flexibility for the parents who worked during regular school hours, and the involvement of the writer with the parents, who felt that they were partners in helping their children to learn. The reported results indicated clearly that parental involvement did help children to learn at home as well as at school. Parents were able to clearly see that because of their involvement, their children had success in school. The attitude of the children toward their school work also improved.

The writer and support team have become visible in the school and community, and have continued to encourage parents to become involved.

Recommendations

The writer has made the following recommendations:

1. An extension of this program should be made to include kindergarten through fifth grade.

2. Each teacher should organize a parent committee to work with other parents in the classroom to help children with homework and other school activities.

3. A representative from each committee should meet monthly to discuss ways to improve the program and to report on the progress that has been made.

4. Each grading period a day should be designated for parents to come to school to observe and view various projects on display in the classroom, or to share a classroom activity.

5. More flexibility should be allowed for in planning. With this in mind, more parents will become involved.

Finally, the writer and support team will continue to encourage and impress upon parents the importance in providing basic study aides in their homes to assist their children with learning. A set of encyclopedias, maps, newspapers, and books that are resourceful in providing information are also recommended.

Dissemination

During implementation, the writer was approached by a youth organization and asked to present a workshop for parents on parental involvement in helping children to learn at one of their parent meetings. Several teachers from other schools in the school district asked for help in getting a program started in their schools.

Plans were already underway to open a parent center, and the writer applied to the school corporation's developmental programs for consideration as a facilitator in its parent program.

Selected portions of this practicum were presented to the principal as part of the building plans for the 1987-88 school year.

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Appendix A

Notice for Parent-Teacher Conference

HELP! HELP! HELP! HELP! HELP!

Class 43

Room 207

September, 1986

Dear Parents,

There will be a parent/teacher conference for three consecutive months (September, October, and November). The meetings are to help your child become a better learner.

Are you willing to work with your child for about 20 minutes each evening? I can show you how to help your child develop good study habits at home.

The meeting for September will be held in Room 207 at 2:35 p.m. on Friday the 12th. Notices will be sent for October and November. Please plan to attend. Check below and sign.

Please Return Immediately

_____ Yes, I will attend.

_____ No, I will not attend.

Child's Name _____

Parent's Signature _____

Appendix B

Parent Survey for Developing a Home Curriculum

Please check one. Do not sign your name.

1. Do you feel you and the teacher are partners in helping your child to learn? Yes_____ No_____

2. Would you like to become involved in a classroom parent program? Yes_____ No_____

3. Would you like to meet at school? Yes_____ No_____

4. Would you care for the teacher to visit you and your child in your home? Yes_____ No_____

5. Do you visit the school on a regular basis? Yes_____ No_____

6. Would you be interested in a parent club? Yes_____ No_____

7. Do you telephone the school to inquire about your child? Yes_____ No_____

8. Can you provide a study area in your home for your child? Yes_____ No_____

9. Does your child go to bed between 8 and 10 o'clock? Yes_____ No_____

10. Does your child eat a good nutritional meal? Yes_____ No_____

11. If you can not come for a parent conference, is there someone you can send? Yes_____ No_____

Appendix C

Home Curriculum Evaluation Form

Please check one of the following for each question.

1. How helpful was the home curriculum?

____satisfactory ____worthwhile ____very worthwhile

2. How helpful was the support team?

____satisfactory ____worthwhile ____very worthwhile

3. How was the rapport between you and the teacher?

____satisfactory ____worthwhile ____very worthwhile

4. Were resource materials appropriate?

____satisfactory ____worthwhile ____very worthwhile

5. Would you encourage others to participate?

____Yes ____No